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PRIA

1998

History of Panchayati Raj in Haryana

Profile

With an area of 44212sq. km. Haryana is bounded on the east by Uttar Pradesh state, Punjab on the west, Himachal Pradesh on the north and Rajasthan on the south. It has the Sivalik hills in the north and river Yamuna in the east. The Aravalli range, which stretches from Delhi to Gujrat also acts as Haryana's south western boundary and runs through Gurgaon region and then enters Rajasthan near Alwar. The river Ghaggar provides a kind of boundary in the west of the state.

Historical background

Haryana was part of the United Provinces under British rule for some time and then part of Punjab in undivided India. In Sir Chotu Ram, Haryana had a great leader who co-operated with the British and was associated with the Unionist regime of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan when Punjab province had its headquarters in Lahore. After the partition of India, Haryana came to be part of East Punjab named later as Punjab. There was a strong movement in Punjab for the separation of Punjab from Haryana and the people of the Haryana region also wanted their own state. Finally the division of Punjab came off in November 1966 when Punjabi speaking areas of the state went to the new state of Punjab and the Hindi speaking areas became part of Haryana. While some of the hill areas were merged with the union territory of Himachal Pradesh which also later became a full-fledged state of India.

The creation of Haryana gave a great fillip to the creative and developmental urges of the Haryanvi people. The state saw a great deal of development in agriculture, irrigation, power and education. The Aya Ram Gaya Ram Phenomenon of political defections also originated from Haryana with a legislator called Gaya Ram lending his name to the unfancied but much practiced technique of changing parties by legislators. The emphasis on development has been the key to Haryana's success since 1966.

Development Priorities

The provision of irrigation facilities on a wide scale has made it possible for the farmers of the state to go in for the production of high yielding varieties of wheat, paddy and also sugarcane, barley, gram and a variety of other crops as well as vegetables and fruit. Against the all-India average of 31.6 percent of net irrigated area to the net sown area, Haryana has a high average of 73.6 percent. These are figures for 1994-95 and the difference between the national figure and Haryana's state figure could have widened even further. The state is notable also in cultivation of as much of the land as is available. The net sown area in Haryana was 73.6 percent as against 44.6 percent for the country as a whole. In other words, in Haryana out of 100 hectares as much as three fourth is cultivated and nearly 80 percent of area under crop is irrigated. The dependence on agriculture is often an indication of backwardness of a state. In the case of Haryana, however, the indication is quite the contrary. It shows that the farmer is so enterprising and the facilities offered to him for higher and higher outputs so productive that agriculture continues to dominate that economy of the state.

Social Development

The above mentioned facts leaves little doubt in anyone's mind about the accelerated economic and infrastructural growth that the state has achieved, however this development appears somewhat lopsided when we study the social scenario prevalent in the state. A close scrutiny of data reveals that the human development indicators are unquestionably lower than several other states in the country, even those which are economically less developed.

Sex ratio: India is among the very few countries in the world where the sex ratios are reversed with lesser women than men. Within India too we find a high degree of variations in sex ratios across states. While some southern states like Kerala have a sex ratio favoring women 1036 females per 1000 males (1991), Haryana is the third lowest in ranking with a sex ratio of 865 females per 1000 males (1991). The all India figure is 927 females per 1000 males (1991).

YEAR	FEMALES PER 100 MALES	ALL INDIA
1971	867	930
1981	870	934
1991	865	927

source: "India towards population and development goals", UNFPA

Infant mortality rate: Despite the IMR in Haryana being lower than the all India figure, Haryana ranks lower than several other similarly economically progressive states like Punjab. Wide gender imbalances are also observed as the IMR of females is considerably higher than that of males. The following two tables illustrate. This point further.

IMR per thousand births (1992)

Country/States	Urban	Rural
India	50	85
Punjab	40	60
Haryana	53	74

source: "India towards population and development goals", UNFPA

Infant mortality rate by sex in Haryana

	1982	1987	1992
Males	91	71	67
Females	100	97	73

source: "India towards population and development goals", UNFPA

Educational status: The literacy level in Haryana is slightly above the national figure. Against the all-India average of 52.21% Haryana had 55.33% of its people who could read and write. Even in respect of female literacy Haryana was a little bit ahead of the national figure with 40% against 39.29% for the nation as a whole. Yet we find that there is a wide disparity between the different districts within the state as well as between the educational levels of women in comparison to men. Despite women being comparatively more literate than many other states of the country, their role in decision making both in the private and public sphere is abysmal.

Decision making: Although post colonial development has transformed the economic status of Haryana to presently being the second richest state in the country, half of its populace i.e. women remain enshrouded and enclosed in ghungat. Their existence is very deeply engrained in the minds of the people of Haryana as caste, class and gender bias and hierarchy. These patriarchal, casteist and feudalistic structures are entrenched in the social fabric of the state. Women who are the main labour force in this state are traditionally perceived as incapable of making any decisions; TRIYA MAT PER JO CHALLE VOH HAIN NIRGYAN {those who follow a woman's advice are fools: (P. Chowdhry 1994)} Such traditional sayings have given impetus to the subordinate role of women in the family and community, excluding them from all decision making processes.

History of Panchayati Raj in the State

After Independence with the enactment of the Punjab gram panchayat Act 1952 gram panchayats were set up at the village level on a mandatory basis. This act was later amended in 1960 and when it became

an independent state in 1966 the local governments institutions operating in the state had three tiers. These included the gram panchayats panchayat samitis and Zilla parotids formed under the 1961 Punjab panchayat Samitis and Zilla parishads Act. Till 1973 the three-tier structure inherited from Punjab were maintained in Haryana, In 1972 an adhoc committee was constituted to evaluate- the performance of the Zilla parishads which expressed the view that the Zilla parishads be abolished as they were superfluous bodies which had failed to perform their coordinating functions. As a result the Zilla parishads were abolished from 13th July 1973. However the real motive behind this move was believed to be political as the political leadership did not want to share powers with the Panchayati Raj leadership.

The gram sabha which had become almost inactive prior to 1966 was crippled further. The authority of the gram panchayats was also eroded as an authorised possession of village common lands by politically affluent persons enjoyed the support of the bureaucracy adversely affected the gram panchayats. Government grants to these bodies were also drastically reduced. The authority of the Sarpanch was also undermined by making provisions for indirect elections to the post. Control over the funds of gram panchayats were transferred to the gram sachiv. However on 22nd April 1994 in conformity with the 73rd amendment 1992 the Haryana Panchayati raj Act 1994 came into force restoring the three tier structure and gram sabha in Conformity with the act prevailing all over the country (R Singh 1994)

PRIA's intervention in Haryana

Against this backdrop in 1995, PRIA started intervening in Haryana with the objective of strengthening Panchayati raj institutions in the State. Given the socio-political milieu our focus along with strengthening panchayats as units of governance, was also enhancing the leadership of women and dalits and their active participation in the decision making processes. We started by drawing up a list of all the stakeholders involved in this process subsequent to the amendment and then went on to identify players who were willing to collaborate with us keeping in mind our perspective and objectives. While in the initial phase we worked primarily with elected representatives of gram panchayats and several voluntary organisation engaged in rural development programmes, towards the end of this phase and in the second phase (august 1997 onward) we found ourselves working with several other important stakeholders like the gram sabha members, elected representatives of the other two tiers namely panchayat samiti and zilla parishad, government officials and other interested individuals. The point worth noting over here is that while we consciously took the initiative to involve some stakeholders, others themselves showed interest in collaborating with us after a considerable amount of extension of our work in many parts of Haryana.

The report has been divided into four sections, section highlights Pria's intervention with different stakeholders and its impact, section II some of the obstacles hindering the process, section III lists some of the important measures taken by the government to strengthen PRI's and lastly section IV gives some thoughts on future directions of our work in the state.

Section I: Interventions and Impact

A. Intervention with VA's : PRIA's intervention in Haryana began with the Collaboration and involvement of voluntary organisations operating in the state.

Role of VA's : While there are innumerable registered organisations in Haryana. very few are engaged in working on developmental issues and even lesser working in rural areas of the state. Their role is limited to implementation of government schemes, issue based work on health, sanitation, environment etc., information dissemination and training. Barring one or two, none of them were working with panchayats,

Our Intervention : After having assessed the role and status of the VA's in the state. PRIA identified some interested and able organisations and individuals primarily working in rural areas. We organised a series of training's and workshops in order to develop a common objective and perspective vis-a-vis

strengthening PRIs. Subsequently a network of 10-12 organisations was initiated around the issue with each organisation developing a systematic plan of action and regular meetings to share ideas and learn from each others experiences. Pria played a pivotal role in strengthening the; network by providing educational support to all the members in accordance with their existing capacities, resources and plans. In collaboration with these organisations the following activities were carried out

- training elected representatives of gram panchayats
- dissemination of educational material e.g. simplification of the ad, posters of gram sabha, newsletter etc.
- Carrying our studies on effective functioning of women Sarpanchs, etc.
- Micro-planning initiatives in selected gram panchayats which involved intensive work with gram sabha members along with elected representatives.
- Block and district level dialogues between all three tiers of panchayats and concerned government representatives

Impact assessment The most noticeable impact of our continuous interaction and support to VA' s is enhanced understanding of the issue and capacities to positively intervene in strengthening PRI's in their work areas. However, despite several attempts to enable these organisations to take up independent initiatives in th.is direction, a majority of them remain dependent on PRIA to initiate the process. Systematically planned meetings and interactions between the network has to some extent initiated an independent sharing of experiences and resources horizontally with or without Pria' s presence. Several new organisations have joint and are joining in this collaborative effort leading to a considerable expansion of our work in more areas of Haryana.

B. Elected representatives of all three tiers and gram sabha members

PRIA has, directly as well as in collaboration with the VAs, been working intensively with panchayat representatives and gram sabha members. Although initially, aw. efforts were concentrated on strengthening only gram panchayat and gram sabha representatives, in the second phase we have focused our efforts towards involving and strengthening representatives of the block samiti and zilla parishad too.

Their role : Even though the Haryana Panchayati raj act was passed in 1994 and elections took place soon after, lack of political will, indifference by the bureaucracy and lack of peoples own understanding of the act and its implications vis-a-vis decentralised governance , has deterred the functioning of panchayats as self governing units. Panchayats have been reduced to mere implementors of government schemes designed and planned from the top, gram sabhas have no role to play and there exists practically no functional link between the three tiers. At all levels elected representatives are only in pursuit of their future political careers.

Our Intervention:

Training's: To begin with, PRIA organised trainings of gram panchayat representatives in collaboration with the VA' s in their areas of work. Several educational materials and other important information were collected prior to these training's. Attempts were made to use several participatory methods to involve the participants and deepen their understanding of roles and responsibilities vested onto them by this Ad. Role of gram sabha was emphasised in all the training's and wherever possible local resource persons(GS, GP members) were used along with video tapes of real gram sabhas held in Haryana.

Strengthening gram sabhas: Efforts were also made to strengthen gram sabhas directly through intensive dialogue and meetings with GS members with a special focus on women and other marginalised groups like the dalits. Meetings were held and videotaped along with documentation of the same. Posters on role of gram sabha were prepared and widely disseminated through existing village groups like mahila mandals, youth groups etc.

Micro-planning: In two panchayats of jhajjar district (Khetavas and Dhana), PRIA undertook intensive micro planning activities with the involvement of the elected representatives and community members.

Following the participatory research methodology, the entire exercise took 9 months after which people centred micro plan's emerged in both the panchayats. Through continuous interactions several issues, needs, priorities, resources etc. were brought to the forefront Presently follow- up of those plans is. being carried out. As a part of this follow-up village information centres have been set up in both the panchayats and are being run by the combined efforts of the elected representatives and the community.

Resource centre; We started a state resource centre on Panchayati raj in Haryana in the second phase of our interventions. Along with collecting information about the status of panchayats in the blocks and districts where we are engaged, list of the VA's, display of material prepared by the government and NGO's on Panchayati raj, information on the different rules and government schemes accruing to rural areas etc., the resource centre also ads as a platform for dialogue and exchange of ideas between elected representatives, VA' s, GS members and government officials. Block/district level, dialogue.

In order to strengthen the organic link between the three tiers as envisaged in the Act, PRIA and its collaborating VA' s have held a series of one day dialogues between representatives of the three tiers. As expressed by all the participants, this was the first occasion where representatives of all three tiers came together under one roof to discuss issues related to economic development and social justice along with strategies to strengthen the organic link so that each one has an important role to play in the process. Issues of accountability and transparency leading to good governance were discussed at length by all the three tiers. It was discovered that many of the problems could be solved at their level since they arose purely out of gaps in communication and linkage between the three tiers. This was observed to be a very effective platform for strengthening the PRIs.

Research: Several studies have been carried out by Pria in Haryana since 1995 namely effective functioning of women headed panchayats, gram sabha study, study of panchayat secretaries and their functioning vis-a-vis gram panchayats, study of the finances devolved to the panchayats and finally a study on the impact of training imparted to the elected representatives by the State training Institutes. These studies have a threefold objective, firstly for our own understanding and learning, secondly to share this information with the panchayats and community through training's, discussions, newsletters etc. and thirdly for advocacy and policy change.

Impact assessment: Measuring the impact of our interventions along indicators, like increased knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities as per the ad, higher level of self confidence, emergence of leadership qualities, ability to negotiate (GS members with GP representatives, GP members with government officials etc.), ability to plan according to needs, priorities & resources available and analysing their role in the larger vision of local self governance, clearly demonstrates a significant impact of our interventions. While th.is impact is quite visible in the case of GS and GP members where there has intensive interventions, the impact on the other two tiers (PS & ZP) and women and dalit elected representatives and gram sabha members is still not so visible. However, several planned efforts are being made in this phase to focus on strengthening leadership amongst the marginalised sections as well as strengthen the organic link between the three tiers.

C. State training institutes

There are three training Institutes in Haryana namely State community development and training Centres (SCDTC), Haryana Institute of rural development (HIRD) and Haryana Institute of Public Administration (HIPA). The former two institutes are responsible for training zilla parishad representatives. and different levels of government officials like the BDOs, gram secretary's, DDPO's etc. While the latter conducts issue based training's with all levels of panchayat representatives and bureaucrats, including the District collector.

Their role : Although they carried out a series of training's with the above mentioned participation Panchayat raj after the elections, there has been no follow-up training's done by the Institutes. In other words, training's related to the Panchayat act and respective roles and responsibilities as per the act,

was a one time affair. However they continue to conduct various issue based training's with elected representatives e.g. health, sanitation etc.

Our Intervention. PRIA has been providing these Institutes with several educational materials like films on Panchayati raj (produced by RSD's), our newsletter, simplification of the ad etc. which they have used as learning material in their training's. We have also participated in some of the training's as resource persons whenever required. At present we are engaged in studying the impact of the training's which had been organised by the Institutes for panchayat representatives. We are still in the process of collecting data.

Impact assessment: The impact of our interventions with these Training Institutes has so far been limited to recognition by them of PriA's experiences on strengthening of PRI' s. However they have shown immense interest in collaborating with us to develop some Haryana specific learning materiel and give other training inputs which is being followed up in this phase.

D. Government

In the initial stages of our intervention, we found the government machinery, especially at the village and block levels, to be either indifferent or resistant to the newly elected representatives and their given roles. Although of late we have experienced a gradual change in the government machinery and organised several collaboration, workshops and dialogues with them, a lot still needs to be done (>) to sensitise the government functionaries, especially at the lower administrative level, towards the role of PRIs vis-a-vis decentralised governance.

Our intervention: Although in the first phase we limited our interactions with UP government, in the second phase we have had several workshops, dialogues with them as well as in collaboration with them for PRI representatives. In November• December 1997, we along with the assistance of the block development officer of Kanhina, district Mahendergarh attended and documented a series of gram sabha meetings. Beginning 1998 (January-March) we in collaboration with BDOs and DDPO held 4 one day dialogues with all three tiers of PRIs and other government functionaries to discuss issues of transparency, accountability and development. We also organised a District level workshop in Rohtak in address these issues and facilitate healthy dialogue between the respective partners.

Impact assessment: Government at the block, tehsil, panchayat levels where PRIA and collaborating VA' s are intervening, has recognised PRIA as an important player in this process. In several places they have co-operated with the elected representatives of the intervened areas and provided appropriate support to them. In some cases they have communicated their interest in future collaborations like training of panchayat secretaries, replicating our micro planning model in the entire block to develop it as a model block etc.

E. Media

The role of the media in the State has been so far restricted to reporting incidents of the discharge of panchayat representatives and workshops organised by the government for PRI representatives, Our intervention: We have so far intervened very little with the media barring few press releases of the workshops organised in collaboration with the block officials and panchayat samiti representatives. In 1998, we organised a one day media workshop at mahendergarh district which has had some coverage.

Section II: Obstacles

There are a few distinct trends which have been mentioned below:

- Financial: According to the Act, it is mandatory for a State finance commission to be set up soon after the enactment of the 73rd amendment which has the responsibility to bring out a report within 6 months giving details of financial devolution to PRIs. In Haryana the SFC has so far (4 years since the enactment of Panchayati raj) not brought out such a report and as a result been dissolved. Apart from

this all the PRI grant coming to the elected representatives is tied to government schemes, leaving very little space or discretion to the elected representatives for utilisation of these funds.

- Bureaucratic: The bureaucracy is by and large very indifferent to PRI's with the exception of a few sensitised and interested functionaries. Frequent transfers often disrupt the process of dialogue with the bureaucracy.
- Political; There is widespread politicisation of the issue in all the three tiers. While at the Gram panchayat level there is tremendous infighting amongst representatives of different political parties, representatives of the PS and ZP levels are mostly pursuing their personal political careers. At the state level there is a total lack of political will towards strengthening of these institutions.
- Lack of understanding: There is very little understanding of the underlying perspective of decentralisation, with this amendment was made. By and large, elected representatives of all three tiers see themselves as mere implementors of centrally determined schemes of the government. The government too promotes and reinforces this role of the representatives.

Section III: Measures taken by the State to strengthen PRI's.

Of late several measures have been taken by the state to ensure effective functioning of PRI's as stated below:

- Since November-December (gram sabha time) 1997, All the ADC's have sent circulars to the districts and block officers to finalise dates of gram sabhas and have at least one officer attending those gram sabha meetings. The block officers are supposed to subsequently send reports of these meetings to the ADC.
- In Faridabad district of Haryana, the DUPO on his own initiative, conducted an awareness drive for strengthening PRI functioning. This included material dissemination, posters, roaming jeeps with loudspeakers etc.
- As many Sarpanchs have complained that the mandatory post of the up-sarpanch is an impediment to their functioning, a discussion on removing the post of up-Sarpanchs was taken up in the State assembly. This is still in the process of being implemented as it is a provision in the central act.
- Land encroachment is a very widespread and sensitive issue, disrupting the developmental initiatives in Haryana. This was discussed in the State Assembly and notices were sent to all BDO's to select one panchayat in their block and solve this issue. They have been instructed to send progress reports directly to the panchayat minister.

Section IV: Future Directions

Three years experience of strengthening PRIs in Haryana coupled with an assessment of our impact in the state has provided us with useful insights for planning our future interventions. Operating within the given framework of the Joint Action programme in the second phase, we have highlighted the future direction of our interventions in Haryana.

- More intensive involvement in direct strengthening of PRI's with collaborating VA's (those we are financially supporting) in their areas of work. In the last phase we were supporting (Rs 1000 per month) three such VA's based in Mahendergarh and Rewari districts. In this phase we shall be extending our support to two more VA's in Rewari and Ambala districts. PRIA staff shall be given individual responsibilities for facilitating intensive strengthening of PRIs in these areas.
- Since we have been approached by several other VA's throughout Haryana, we shall be organising a State level training on Panchayati raj for their staff. The training would encompass knowledge and awareness of the ACT and our perspective in relation to the amendment, information on the functioning of PRI's in the state as it exists, sharing our experiences on micro-planning, developing their training skill and formulating areas/organizational specific future plans. An appropriate strategy shall be developed for follow-up of this plan in the respective areas.
- We feel there is an urgent need to systematically collaborate with the training Institutes for strengthening their training's (design, content, perspective, learning material etc.) for PRI representatives and government functionaries. We also plan to organise a training of ADC's at PRIA with the support of resource persons like Dr Rajesh Tandon, some RSO trainers, Mr. N.C Saxena, L.C Jain and other eminent persons.

- There are several existing networks of PRI representatives which we have identified and plan to study. These networks are presently very politicized and need to be strengthened to take up issues of local self-governance. In due course we also aim to initiate a few more networks of women Sarpanchs etc.
- Similarly, there are several key players like NYK's, anganwadi workers, sanjivinis etc. existing in every panchayat of the State or district. We shall be undertaking a short study on the functioning of these bodies and develop a module on their role in strengthening PRI's. This shall be disseminated through training's/orientations conducted by PRIA for District coordinators of these institutions.

We shall be organising a state level dialogue with government functionaries, representatives of all three tiers, VA's, gram sabha members, other interested and active individuals and media, towards the end of July. The three-fold objective of this workshop will be to firstly share our experiences and study findings, secondly to discuss the various issues and concerns and lastly to make some state level recommendations for strengthening PRI's.

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